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THE MONTHLY GULL BULLETIN

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

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A Few Winter Observations

In 1935 I took a Christmas bird census of Bay Farm Island, and it was published in the January, 1936, GULL. On December 19, 1936, I made a rough survey of birds not only on Bay Farm Island but on the East Oakland shore at Alvarado and at the Leslie Salt Works. While this is not a census, I feel that a few general notes might be of interest for comparison, especially in view of the fact that the season had been so abnormally dry, less than an inch of rain having fallen, and this same unusual condition having prevailed also in the states to the north of us. Since time and height of tide always affect the observations, I am giving the following data: high tide 3:59 a. m., height 5 feet; low tide 9:11 a. m., height 2.7 feet.

Shortly before 7 a. m., when the light was too weak to identify birds readily, I was standing upon the dirt embankment at the Commerce Radio Station at Bay Farm Island, and as I looked eastward across San Leandro Bay the water was well covered with ducks. One could hear and see large numbers of Pintails and Baldpates, and be certain of some Ruddy Ducks, a few Canvas-backs and an unusual number of American Golden-eyes. At times several dozen of these Golden-eyes would be feeding together. Many were close to shore. All during the fall I had noticed this species in larger numbers than in previous years.

Some 400 Marbled Godwits were massed along the shore waiting for their feeding grounds to become uncovered. At ten o'clock along Otis Drive on the south side of Alameda, Least, Western and Red-backed Sandpipers with a good sprinkling of Sanderlings were feeding. Under perfect light conditions identification was certain. There were ten Least Sandpipers to one Western, while at the Monarch Box Factory on the East Oakland shore the ratio was reversed.

One Holboell Grebe was seen at the Bay Farm Island bridge. Scaups had become more numerous at this date but they prefer the San Francisco Bay shore side of Bay Farm Island and Alameda to San Leandro Bay.

One should not fail to mention the California Clapper Rail. They have either increased in numbers or have become more concentrated. From the road along the north side of the Alameda Municipal Golf Course as the tide was receding not less than twelve rail were seen.

At the Alvarado Gun Club there were more than 500 Shovellers, these far outnumbering all the other species of ducks together. At the Leslie Salt Works birds were only in fair numbers, but possibly this was on account of the tide being low. Scattered among the less interesting species there were a few American Egrets and about forty Avocets.

On December 24, 1936, after a heavy rain during the night, I made the rounds (Alameda and Bay Farm Island) early in the morning. Birds of all kinds were numerous but there was nothing new to report except that more Canvas-backs and Scaups had come in and Buffle-heads were actively feeding near the Commerce Station and along Otis Drive. I counted some fifteen individuals. Two American Egrets were in the field opposite the golf course.

In the late afternoon of January 3rd, I again went to East Oakland and Bay Farm Island to see whether or not the heavy storms and colder weather had made a change in the bird population. Ducks, Gulls and Shore Birds were as numerous as before. There was, however, no way of telling if some of those that had been there were replaced by others from farther north. One thing is certain, there is always something that repays one for making a bird trip. That day the air was crystal clear; the distant Oakland hills were just showing a faint sheen of green with some of their summits under a light blanket of snow, and as the sun sank from view the hills turned to all shades of purple and amethyst, the water became opalescent with hardly a ripple on its surface, and good-sized flocks of Sandpipers were anxiously flying about as the tide was ebbing, trying to find some spot where they could alight and have their evening meal. Just another mood of the ever fascinating shore.

A few remarks about the Borden Highway and King Island seem in order just to have a record from those localities for Christmas time, 1936. On December 24th, along the Borden Highway I saw fourteen American Egrets, three White-tailed Kites, two Marsh Hawks, myriads of Blackbirds, many Shrikes and Sparrow Hawks and seventeen Whistling Swans. On December 9th, I counted 500 Whistling Swans on Victoria Island, some of them flying overhead. Since the close of the hunting season the island has been drained and only a few Coots and Ducks frequent the ditches. Early on the morning of the 27th after a very heavy storm I searched King Island as well as the region about Terminus and west of Lodi for Cranes but found none. They had been reported from these stations earlier in the season. There were small groups of Ducks and one flight of 250 Canada Geese. In one rain pool some twelve Yellow-legs were feeding. Crows were extremely abundant.

Junea W. Kelly, Alameda, California. January 5, 1937.

Butcher-bird versus Sparrows

Several times this fall I have noted a California Shrike, *Lanius ludovicianus gambeli*, at my W. B. B. A. two-compartment banding trap eyeing with interest the occupant of the trap, which was on each occasion a Nuttall Sparrow. While the "butcher-bird" was under observation it hopped about on the ground within a few feet of the trap, once lighting on the top of the cage. The sparrow, of course, was much frightened, trying desperately to escape. There is no doubt that the sparrow was the attraction for the shrike as the latter paid no attention to bread crumbs about on the ground.

On November 1, 1936, I finally caught the shrike in one compartment while a Golden-crowned Sparrow, *Zonotrichia coronata*, was in the other. This makes the third time so far as my records go that a shrike has been caught along with another bird in this type of trap, the previous occasions being as follows: by Robert Taylor, October 5, 1932 (The Gull, December, 1932); and by the writer, October 24, 1932 (The Gull, February, 1933).

Has anyone had the experience of catching a "butcher-bird" in one of the W. B. B. A. Government Sparrow traps or other type of trap in the same chamber with other species?

Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California. December 20, 1936.

Saint Mary's, Contra Costa County

The May field trip was taken on the 16th to Saint Mary's, Contra Costa County. Twenty-two members and five guests attended. The day was pleasant, although at first for a while there was considerable breeze. The row of eucalyptus trees along the highway where we started did not produce its usual quota of birds.

Mr. Emile A. Pierre very kindly permitted us to walk through his property, which is thickly wooded, where we not only found birds but enjoyed the many

wild flowers. Crossing a little stream we took a trail up to the highway. From there we went to Cashin Canyon beyond the picnic grounds and ate lunch on a lovely grassy spot beneath some trees. In the afternoon the walk was continued for a considerable distance up the canyon. Returning we took the road which brought us out at the college grounds.

Nests of the following birds were found: Killdeer, Black Phoebe, Slender-billed Nuthatch, House Wren, Brewer Blackbird and House Finch. The Mockingbird was seen, a new addition to our records at Saint Mary's.

A total of fifty-one species was observed as follows:

Turkey Vulture	Violet-green Swallow	Pileolated Warbler
Cooper Hawk	Tree Swallow	English Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Rough-winged Swallow	Meadowlark
Sparrow Hawk	Cliff Swallow	Bicolored Red-wing
Quail	California Jay	Bullock Oriole
Killdeer	Plain Titmouse	Brewer Blackbird
Spotted Sandpiper	Slender-billed Nuthatch	Western Tanager
Mourning Dove	Wren-tit	Black-headed Grosbeak
Allen Hummingbird	House Wren	Lazuli Bunting
Red-shafted Flicker	Mockingbird	House Finch
California Woodpecker	Russet-backed Thrush	Willow Goldfinch
Willow Woodpecker	Western Bluebird	Green-backed Goldfinch
Western Kingbird	Cassin Vireo	Lawrence Goldfinch
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Warbling Vireo	Sacramento Towhee
Black Phoebe	Lutescent Warbler	Brown Towhee
Western Flycatcher	Yellow Warbler	Junco
Wood Pewee	Macgillivary Warbler	Song Sparrow

The following members attended: Messrs. and Mesdames Andrews, Millard, Myer, Stephens; Mesdames Courtright, Mexia; Misses Cohen, Conant, Giddings, Hunt, MacIver, Sterne, Yeamans; Commander Parmenter; Messrs. Jencks, Power; Masters Erwin Berliner and Harold Kirker; with five guests: Mesdames Atterbury, Jencks; Misses Collins, Curtis and Master Wheeler Childs.

Laura A. Stephens, historian.

Oil Pollution

On March 6, 1937, the liner President Coolidge and the oil tanker Frank H. Buck collided in a dense fog a mile off Point Bonita. The smaller craft did not sink at once as might have been expected, but was so badly damaged that it was forced to make for shore, where it grounded at Land's End with its bow down in the water.

Our interest in that event is that ever since its occurrence the tanker has been spilling great quantities of its huge cargo of crude oil into the bay, which means a veritable death trap to all birds that light upon the viscous waters. The tides and currents have distributed this pollution to all the shores of the bay and many miles north and south along the ocean beach. On March 20th, between the Cliff House and Seal Rocks, the water was black with it.

Only a few cormorants and two Brown Pelicans were seen on the rocks. They evidently had gotten into the oil as they were frantically picking at their feathers. Two Black Turnstones were observed, but they were in good condition, due, doubtless, to their habit of staying up on the rocks. At this location only a few weeks earlier (February 12th) hundreds of Brandt Cormorants were present, many in breeding plumage and several carrying nesting materials.

Five days after the wreck Gordon Bolander walked along the beach from the Cliff House to Mussel Rock, a distance of several miles, and noted 188 dead birds, all oil-soaked, but it was impossible to determine the species of some of them. Of the thirty-four scoters identified, the White-winged outnumbered the Surf Scoters two to one. The complete list is as follows: Red-throated Loon 1; Western Grebe 35; Scoters 34; Western and Glaucous-winged Gulls 13; California Gull 1; California Murre 84; Rhinoceros Auklet 1; Belted Kingfisher 1; Loon 4; Cormorant 1; Scaup 1; Murrelet 12.

Audubon Notes

June Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday evening, the 10th, at 8 o'clock, in room 19, Ferry Building.

The speaker will be Mr. Tom L. Rogers of Berkeley, whose subject will be "Behavior of the Pine Siskin."

Members may bring guests.

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June Field Trip will be taken on Sunday, the 13th, to Ross, Marin County. Those so desiring may start from Fairfax. Purchase round-trip ticket to Ross or Fairfax, 65c. Take Sausalito Ferry at 8:45 a. m. Those desiring to remain for supper bring food for two meals.

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"Birds of Marin County," published by the Audubon Association of the Pacific, giving a list of the birds found in Marin County, may be obtained from the leader, price 25 cents.

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May Meeting: The 237th regular meeting was held on the 13th, in room 19, Ferry Building, forty-two members and guests being present. President Junea W. Kelly presiding.

The following new members were elected: Misses Helene Conant, Georgina Fenwick, M. Laura Kennedy, all of San Francisco, and Miss Elizabeth E. Roberts of Berkeley.

The following observations were reported:

Mrs. Millard reported having a Lazuli Bunting in her garden in San Francisco since May 10th.

Commander Parmenter: Cliff House, May 4th; Wandering Tattler, 100± Shearwaters; Metson Lake, Golden Gate Park, May 13th, Mourning Dove; Alvarado, April 13th, Snowy Heron; Tomales Bay, 16th, 5000± Black Brant; Stow Lake, Golden Gate Park, 26th, two Ring-necked Ducks; San Mateo Bridge, 22nd, 27 Greater Scaup. He also gives the last date on which Surf Birds were seen at the Cliff House as April 12th, and for Ruddy and Black Turnstones as May 4th.

Miss Pringle reported a Russet-backed Thrush in her garden in San Francisco on May 9th.

Mr. Webb: Golden Gate Park, April 17th, Black-throated Gray Warbler; 25th, Olive-sided Flycatcher; May 8th, Rough-winged Swallow; Mr. Webb's garden, April 22nd, Russet-backed Thrush.

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Directors' Meeting: A meeting of the directors will be held before the regular meeting in the Ferry Building at 7:30 p. m.

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Book Notice: "Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey," part 1, by Arthur Cleveland Bent. This is United States Bulletin No. 167, the tenth of a series on life histories of North American birds, and is obtainable from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. Price, 70 cents.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

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For the Study and the Protection of Birds

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Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Room 19, Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, $3.00 per year.

Student memberships, $1.50 per year. Life memberships, $50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.